

the church, or for reformers, to declaim against an evil literature unless they can offer in its stead that which is wholesome and good, in such attractive dress that the young will be irresistibly drawn from the swill of sensationalism and the cesspool of a demoralizing literature. There is a loud call for Christian capital and Christian talent to be consecrated to popular journalism. Genius and money must produce great dailies fit to come into our Christian families, and incidentally the Christian conscience must be educated to withhold patronage from every publication, however brilliant, which is a menace to the moral health and intellectual development of the young. This then must be the first characteristic of the literature for the times, there must be that element of strength, that purity of sentiment, that elegance of style and taste, that attractiveness in form and dress that will give it power to supplant the literature which is a menace to public morality and a constant barrier to the highest intellectual and spiritual growth and development.

Second, besides this, and more important than every other consideration, a periodical religious literature must be created in such attractive form, dress, finish, originality, as to be able to command the sustained and absorbed attention of the young people as well as the old. In other words, the literature for the times must, in a large sense, be a literature for the young. It is for *them* that we are making a literature, and if we hope to win them and make them constant supporters and readers of our literature, there are certain elements characteristic of the youthful mind which we can not, dare not ignore. One of these is the passion for the story in literature, not only natural, but entirely lawful, for the literature which was and is and will be the literature for all times and all ages, is very largely a book of stories. It is surprising to find how large a place is given to the story in the Holy Scriptures. God's great men whose names have been considered worthy of a place in the sacred book have been teachers of men and women, and largely young men and women. Israel's noblest men, the prophets, were the religious teachers of their time, and may we not say for all time, for the instructions given by God's ancient teachers are not obsolete nor too religious for an age that is rapidly plunging into a seething sea of worldliness and secularism. Jesus, the teacher pre-eminent of all times and for all times, recognized the power of the story and his teachings abound in stories which for brevity, beauty, and sublimity, have never yet been equaled by the combined wisdom of the world. The writer of stories, the purveyor of fiction, is sure to have the vast army of young men and young women for his readers. To ignore this fact is to ignore a very large and a powerful element both in the church and in the world. And in this day of endless production of fiction, good, bad, and every other kind, would it not be wis-

dom on the part of the church, in recognition of the principle herein enunciated, to give itself more largely to the production of this kind of literature, translate religious truth and sentiment into the language of the story, in form, and dress, and originality, at once attractive and winning to the youthful heart and mind. A recognition of this principle led our Brother Talley to write a tract purely fiction, but which has for its foundation divine truth on which the story is built. Cognizant of this fact Harriet Beecher Stowe gave to the world, aside from the Bible, the greatest book ever written, and this book was blest of the Lord to the giving of a new birth to human freedom, a book which has done more than powder and cannon in breaking the shackles of four million slaves. *Theodosia Earnest*, a story of the triumphs of an immersionist, has made thousands of believers, both in theory and practice, in the Bible doctrine of immersion. "*In His Steps*," a story of applied Christianity in the social and commercial world has had a sale of millions of copies in England and this country. That touching story has left, wherever it has been read, a longing desire in the human heart for the dawning of the ideal society in which every man will look to his neighbor's as well as his own interest. Let the church give to its young people a literature attractive in form and dress, possessed of an originality and freshness, which appeals to the noblest element in their nature, the loftiest emotions and aspirations of the soul, a literature in which purity of sentiment is joined with elegance of taste, and which while it informs the mind at the same time refines the feelings of the heart, a literature that will supplant the sensational novel, and lead the young of set choice, to eschew that whole class of sentimental fiction in which vice is dressed in a fashionable garb, and Christianity so often treated with irreverence or contempt.

But thirdly, and lastly, the literature for the times must be, pre-eminently, a literature in which the moral and the spiritual elements largely predominate. It is not true that people will not read a literature in which these elements predominate. The one book whose sole purpose is that of spiritual instruction has had and still has more readers than all others combined. The last decade has witnessed an unprecedented attention given to the Bible as literature, and it is the universal opinion of scholars that the literature of this blessed book stands alone and supreme among all the literature that the wisdom of the world has produced. Not long ago it was my privilege to listen to a very able sermon on the Bible in which the speaker, a man who has lived more than three score years and ten, said that seventy years ago he knelt at his mother's knee and repeated in child like simplicity the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, and since that day has read them an innumerable number of times, and yet they have lost none of their beauty, their sublime grandeur, fresh-

ness and originality. The critical study of the Bible has developed the keenest and most giant intellects the world has ever known. The men and women who have given to this world the very best in the way of literature have been close students and critics of the Bible. While the Bible has a message for the simple children, it also has a message for educated intellect. Before now such men as Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Hooker, Pascal, Butler, Newton, and a host of others, the great masters of human thought have bowed before this book and acknowledged its supremacy. If all the commentaries, critical, exegetical, and homiletical, that have been written on the Bible, if all the histories and all the critical works of which the Bible is the foundation, and of which it has furnished the themes, if all these books could be gathered together into one place, in point of magnitude and literary merit, all other books the wisdom of the world has produced would pale into insignificance. As early as the third century it was found that if every New Testament were destroyed by fire it could be reproduced, except eleven verses, from commentaries which had already been written. And today, if every New Testament in the world were confined to the flames the entire book could be reproduced from the memory of men and women who have stored the precious treasure away in the inaccessible recesses of the human mind. Other books come and go; a vast majority of them never pay for the making of them; it is estimated that only fifteen books out of every hundred pay the price of printing the first edition. An authority on books says that a safe rule is not to purchase a book until it is two years old; if after that period it is still on the market and retains its vitality, it means that it has found an ally in the deep conscious needs of the soul and it is safe to buy it. The books we write and the literature we produce will pass away with the changes of time, but the Bible grows fresher with every age, and proves its adaptability to all the changes time has wrought. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has served its purpose; *Ben Hur* is on the decline; even *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book that stands nearer the Bible than any other that has ever been written, does not possess the same freshness, vitality, and originality today as it did of old. *Looking Backward* lost its popularity before its ardent admirers realized the ideal society which it prophesies. But the words of divine revelation endure forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away but the word of the Lord continues. Its purpose will not be fulfilled until this world is saved from the curse and consequences of sin. After all it is to this book that we must look for the literature of and for the times. It alone will dispel ignorance and superstition; it alone will enter the dark places of the earth and bring to the oppressed people the light and the freedom which are from God. Neither science nor philosophy can solve the problem of human existence, and the destiny of man viewed in the light of his origin.